

**Minutes of the General Purposes Committee held on Wednesday, 21st May
2014 at 7.30pm in the Town Hall**

PRESENT:

Cllr. G. Wilson (Chairman)
Cllrs Hale, Price, Adams & Connolly

IN ATTENDANCE:

Cllrs Anstey, Perkins & Lewendon
Mrs H Richards, Town Clerk
Mrs M Coatham, Finance Officer
Ruth Croker, Footpath Officer
15 Members of the public

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Cllr Buchanan & Cllr A Wilson

2. To receive any declarations of interest

None received

3. To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on the 19th March 2014 and report on any matters arising

It was proposed by Cllr Hale and seconded by Cllr Price and **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 19th March 2014 be signed as a true record.

Minute No. 6 – Repairs to Town Hall – the Town Clerk advised that this work is scheduled to commence this week.

4. To receive any matters raised by Members of the Public

Footpath no 78b – The Chairman asked the Footpath Officer, Ruth Croker to update the meeting on the current situation regarding the footpath at Puddleslosh Lane. Ms Croker reported that she had visited the site that day and that she had been in regular contact with The Countryside Team at Hampshire County Council(HCC) . The path is designated as a footpath only with no requirement for it to be made up to a standard for wheelchairs or pushchairs. Historically the path has moved away from the original line of the designated path. The path had been allowed to become overgrown with the boundary hedge following the original line of the path. Since the removal of the hedgerow and the subsequent purchase of the land, the new owner, after seeking advice from HCC, has erected an electric fence in order for users to be directed onto the official path line. Following the removal of the hedge, the surface of the path has been left very uneven with tree stumps also present making passage along it difficult. The landowner is working with HCC to improve the surface of the path but Ms Croker advised the meeting that remedial work would only be required up to a standard to allow walking along the path; any enhancement to the designation would require an application to The Countryside Team

Members of the public stated that as the path on its shifted route had been established for many years, this could be recognised as an established route.

Ms Croker responded by advising that paths can only be classed as “established” if it can be evidenced that the path was in use for the 20 years from 1982 to 2002 and that the process to establish a path was long.

The Police had informed that actions must be lawful and the law of reason must be applied. Although members of the public questioned whether it was lawful to remove the hedgerow, Cllr Connolly made a plea for respect to Landowner to be shown. The

fence that has been erected adjacent to the footpath, is an electric fence and concern was expressed regarding the suitability of this. Concern was also raised regarding whether a risk assessment had been carried out and potential danger to users of the path and who was responsible should an injury be sustained.

There was a short adjournment while some Members of the Public and the Footpath Officer left the meeting.

5. To conduct the Annual review of the Terms of Reference for this Committee and inclusion of the Information Office and Terms of Reference relating to the Disability Access Committee.

The Terms of reference were reviewed and it was AGREED that the following amendments should be made:

Item 5 List of properties under the care and control of the Committee to include:

The Information Office

Item 11 List of properties for which annual Risk Assessments are carried out to include:

The Information Office

The revised document to be agreed at the next meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 16th July 2014.

6. To report on matters concerning St Mary's Closed Churchyard and Stuckton Road Cemetery

The Chairman advised the meeting that the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk are to visit Stuckton Road Cemetery on Thursday 25th May 2014 to update the plan of graves and plots.

7. To report on any matters relating to the Town Hall

Roof Repairs – The Clerk advised that works are scheduled to start on the repairs to the Town Hall within the current week.

Town Hall Hire Fees – The following additions were AGREED to the schedule of Hire Charges for the Town Hall to include additional charges for Alcohol and Music Licences:

All single bookings must be paid in advance.

Use of premises Licence £10 per session (to allow sale of alcohol)

Use of PRS (Music Licence) £20 per session (live music) or £6 per session (film shows)

8. To report on any matters concerning Footpaths

Item dealt with under Agenda Item 4

Cllr G Wilson informed Members that she would be attending a Countryside Access Team Conference "Pathways to Partnerships" on 5th June with the Town Clerk

9. To report on any matters concerning Highways

The Chairman reported that potholes in the Town Centre had been repaired in the past few days.

The programme of replacement lighting is currently underway in Fordingbridge.

10. To report on any matters concerning Allotments

The Chairman reported that as Plots became vacant, they are being divided and let as two half plots. There are currently 6 names on the waiting list for allotments and 4 plots which remain un-worked. Judging of the allotments will be carried out in June or July. The Chairman also advised that no refunds would be made to Allotment Holders who terminate their tenancy mid-term. The Portable Toilet was in place and the Finance Officer was asked to report the costs of this provision to Finance and Policy Committee. Members discussed whether this was cost effective and whether Developers Contributions could be used for the provision of a permanent toilet. The Chairman reported that funding could be sought if the Allotment holders formed an association which they are reluctant to do.

The Chairman requested that the Mayor attend the next Allotment meeting.

11. To report on matters concerning the information office

Risk Assessment – The Town Clerk advised Members that a meeting had been arranged for 23rd May 2014 between The Mayor, Town Clerk and Sue Plumb from the Information Office together with Glynne Miles and Marie Dunkinson from NFDC to discuss the finds of the Risk Assessment and any remedial actions that are required.

12. To discuss the 2014 Summer Playscheme

The Finance Officer reported that confirmation had been received from Hampshire CC of Grant Money awarded and a further grant from New Forest DC was awaited. The Hampshire CC grant was reduced from last years award, however the period for the play scheme to run had also been reduced to 10 days – overall less subsidy should be required from The Town Council.

13. To note any items of correspondence

Nothing to report

14. To receive a report from the Clerk or any other relevant business

Nothing to report from the Clerk.

Information Office Cllr Hale asked that further discussion and consideration should be given by all Members to the long term provision and siting of the information office with possible re-location to the Town Hall.

Street Lighting Replacement – Town Clerk had contacted HCC to obtain a programme of works for the scheme.

1. **15. To note the date of the next meeting as 16th July 2014 which will be preceded by a visit to Stuckton Road Cemetery and Fry's Field Allotments**

The meeting ended at 8.15pm